304 which would be a dangerous one (1). The same rule applies to the
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1. The approach of the virulent wanzo of the uncircumcised boy acts upon those of the boys undergoing the operations and afflicts them in the genital organs.

enclosure, consisting of several huts, where the newly circumcised boys remain under the surveillance of the sema. The enclosure is situated at a distance of several tens of meters from the village in order to isolate the age grade. For all that touches them, such as clothing, sticks, sistrums, dishes, and refuse, with the exception of the cap, is impregnated with their wanzo.

561 304 [431] The newly circumcised boys receive from their parents gifts of cowrie shells and food called wanzo sababu yala, "in honor of the wanzo," to speed their recovery.

[794] On the night which precedes the sixth day after the operation, a day called daworo, the children are initiated to the Komo (2).

2. See p. 203.

The following day, the sema leads them to the edge of the river, where they wash their wounds for the first time. This act, which brings about direct intervention of the element in which Faro lives, has moreover a social meaning: it consecrates the age grade and from this moment on, the children belong for the rest of their lives to the same flã, exchanging jokes and insults which are suitable between senãnku (3). It must be noted that this very simple act of communal

3. See p. 119.

ablution constitutes the inauguration of an age grade of circumcised boys and sets off from that moment all the rights and obligations its members will have toward each other.

A meal, eaten in common and accompanied by songs and dances, ends the ceremonies of the daworo. Hereafter the ablutions are repeated daily until the wounds are healed.

304 561 881 /187/ On the last day, all that has been in contact with the newly circumcised boys is gathered together at a crossroad near the enclosure.

304 561 881 Sistrums, sticks, mats, as well as the wood from the huts and the refuse that has been carefully swept up, are put in a pile which is ignited. Each circumcised boy jumps over the fire three times and then runs to his home without looking back. In this way he finally loses the rest of the wanzo which he has kept after the operation. Only his cap is brought back and given his mother who keeps it until her death. On the next day, after putting on new clothes the boy is taught what he himself is in the following words: "the person is yo and yo is the person (1)" and in the circumstances of creation. He is

1. Ma ye yo ye, yo ye ma ye.
On yo see pp. 18-26.

then admitted completely into the society of the male adults of his village.

Circumcision has a profound effect upon the person. At this moment, the child loses the physical support of the female sex which is the foreskin; he becomes a man (vir) ready to fulfill his role of a male capable of reproducing. Moreover, he "throws off his wanzo" which escapes from the body at the moment of the operation (2). In his

2. Wanzo file la. The wearing of clothing and ornaments assumes great importance in the loss of the wanzo. Among the Bozo, where the children are circumcised very young, they are not considered to have lost their wanzo until the moment these clothes are given to them.

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leap above the fire this force joins, in the altars and the mask of the ndomo, the forces of both the uncircumcised and the circumcised of the preceding years (3).

3. See p. 227.

At the same time the circumcised boy improves his tere, for this latter force, diminished by the bloody operation, increases at the moment when the child dons his new clothing. Until his circumcision, the child only performed minor tasks; after circumcision he is considered a male adult and officially admitted to the rituals and labors of the community.

853 A child is nursed for two or even three years, and theoretically, a woman should abstain from sexual intercourse throughout this period. In practice, however, the period of three months mentioned above is the limit of such abstention.

854 Childhood. While he is small, the child remains with his mother, whether she cares for him herself, has him cared for by a slave especially designated for the duty, or turns him over to one of her daughters.

During the nursing period of two or even three years, he is carried astraddle by his mother or some other person entrusted with his care until his legs are strong enough for him to run about the house and its vicinity.

857 At about six or eight years old, he is drawn into the juvenile organization known as n-tomo, and he never fails to join it as soon as he is welcome. Little girls are less free; they are kept at home and put to work at household duties, such as bringing water and wood and watching the fire.

881 Puberty. As we shall see, the n-tomo prepares the child for the soli, a ceremony which marks the most important event of his life, civil puberty. The essential but not the only rite involved in this ceremony is circumcision. In principle, the soli is limited to pubescent boys and this implies that all who go through the ceremony have physically reached puberty. Aside from the fact, however, that this condition is reached at differing ages, the boys who undergo the ceremony differ in age because the soli does not take place every year, owing to the considerable expense involved.

882 When the soli is behind him, a boy is no longer a child; he is not exactly a man either, but rather is a "young master," a kamalen'. Since he is admitted to the brotherhoods, apparently his discretion can be counted on, and he is considered competent to take an oath so he can be called upon to testify in a dispute. Also, if he is enterprising enough to attract attention to himself, he is given trifling missions which inspire him to persevere. Furthermore, since by now he has been made sophisticated by his companions in the n-tomo, his relations with his female companion

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621 These are the principal resources of the community
622 treasury, which is held and administered by the dugu-tigi with
651 the help and under the control of the fa. The dugu-tigi may
652 use the treasury to help him perform his duties honorably, to assist unfortunate or indigent members of the community, to receive the guests of the community in a suitable manner, and to meet emergencies.

[661] Under no circumstances does this treasury constitute any part of the personal fortune of the dugu-tigi. Only usurpation, which is fairly common under various guises, alters this state of affairs. In the same way, it is not uncommon for this wealth to be divided in some measure among the members of the council, who in one way or another appropriate it. Such abuses, no matter how common, do not in the least alter the principle that legally such wealth is and remains exclusively the property of the community. [234]

Chapter 4

Brotherhoods

1. The End of Childhood

794 General considerations. The cult of the ancestors and of
● 881 the nyana dugu-da-siri are not enough for the Bambara in his efforts to make sure of the protection, help, and services of the invisible world. The magician has created for him some renowned protectors or servitors which are powerful and formidable: the nyana of the boli.

The cult of these gods gives rise to spiritual families whose members are so closely linked by the bonds of fraternity that we may safely say that these groupings are brotherhoods. All these brotherhoods share the common characteristic that no one can be received into them before having submitted to a certain rite called soli (1) or bolo-ko (1), terms which

1. Soli is the word for the action of piercing, emerging, laying an egg, or

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881 being born; bolo-ko literally means "affair involving birth."

etymologically mean "birth."

Having entered the family through physical birth, a child enters a new phase of his life through the spiritual birth represented by the soli. Through this rite, a child in fact ceases to belong to sexless childhood and becomes: the boy, a man; the girl, a woman. Let us look at the stages of this change of status which is truly the principal event of a native's life.

857 Until he is about seven years old, a small boy lives in daily contact with his mother, only slipping away, as time goes on, to play nearby with his friends.

During this period, one can already observe the influence [235] of the native milieu on the development of his young soul. He has watched cult and magic practices, and he too plays at being a magician to kill or capture rats, lizards, and other small animals for his little feasts. He collects roots with simulated rites and attaches them to his toy bow so as to ensure the success of his hunting, believing that he has attracted a spirit by promising an offering of the blood of his victims. He is already a little hunter, seeking mysterious procedures through which game can be and ought to be put at his mercy without danger to himself.

881 Around the age of seven, he is thinking about the crucial act of his life, the soli, one of whose rites is that of circumcision.
794 Observance of the soli, complete with public circumcision and preceded and followed by membership in a brotherhood, is not absolutely indispensable. When, by reason of circumstances, a child lives in an isolated situation, he undergoes the soli within the family circle, without fuss, and this in no way lessens the validity of the act.

881 There is no doubt, however, that nothing but absolute
794 necessity will make a Bambara do this; he loathes such wretched
561 economy, which in any case seems inappropriate to such an im-
571 portant occasion (1). On the contrary, he loves to take part in

1. Besides, since no exact age limit is

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imposed and since there may be as much as six or seven years' difference in age between the oldest and youngest children participating in the same soli, it is obviously possible for a candidate to arrange to be included at some point within this range of ages so as not to be an isolated case.

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a noisy demonstration and to share in all of the rejoicing the brotherhoods provide for their members. This is by no means the least of the reasons for the spread of these brotherhoods, to which the n-Tomo (2) is really the front door, since no one is

2. n-Tomo is the term used in the Ségou area; in Kaarta the term n-Tori is used.

admitted to a brotherhood unless he is soli-ma, and the specific final object of the n-Tomo is the soli.

n-Tomo

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The n-Tomo is an association which, in preparation for the soli, bands together boys (3) of about seven to fourteen years

3. Little girls have no organized society to prepare them for the soli, but they have agreements among themselves and, in addition, are chosen as n-golo-moso-u by the n-Tomo-den'-u.

Each [236] n-Tomo normally includes all the boys due to be circumcised, without distinction by race or rank. Each member is called n-Tomo-den'; the eldest is the leader or n-Tomo-tigi, and he is assisted by a syere or "follower." New members are received every year at the time of the annual festival, and they must pay an entrance fee (a chicken) and a few cowries

561 and take an oath of secrecy. The boy leaves the n-Tomo
857 after the soli. Girls are not admitted.

The n-Tomo-tigi and his syere organize the association
●881 so as to assure it some property which in principle is collective property. Through common abuse, however, they are the primary if not the sole beneficiaries of it. They persuade their comrades to cultivate a field whose produce will provide the food for their club feasts. The entrance fee is augmented by force, spontaneously or at the order of the n-Tomo-tigi: gifts, collections, theft, hunting, fishing, etc.; in short, anything may be collected by individual or collective effort to form a kind of common treasury.

857 There is no collectivity, however, without its spiritual
793 patron. The n-Tomo meets out-of-doors, at the foot of a tree (1) believed to be the chosen home of a genie-protector.

1. The name "n-Tomo" comes from this. It has been thought that the term was simply the name of the tree where the genie-protector lives and that it was the tree which the Bambara call "n-Tomo." If this were true, why should people in Kaarta use the term "n-Tori" when the tree called n-Tomo does not change its name? It has been suggested that n-Tori is another word meaning "toad" and came from the peculiar "cry" characteristic of the society.

It is my belief that the two terms, "n-Tomo" and "n-Tori" designate the same grouping in different regions and have one and the same meaning: meeting, assembly.

The n-Tomo-tigi is the high priest of this genie; as such he receives the oaths of the neophytes and has a certain degree of authority over the whole band, which enables him to punish any misdeed committed by a n-Tomo-den'. He does not hesitate to use corporal punishment.

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Soli (2)

2. The word soli is used in Kaarta; at Ségou the term is boloko or ngolo-ko, literally, "affair of birth."

The single word soli is used for what we call circumcision and excision. This is because a Bambara has in mind not this or that surgical operation, accessory in nature, but rather the ceremony which for boys and girls alike marks the passage or, more accurately in line with the etymology of the word soli, the fact of being born to a new status.

881 The soli does not take place every year, because it involves considerable expense for the families, which they cannot always meet. At the instigation of the boys who must undergo the soli and who, therefore are called soli-ma-u (people of the soli), the family heads assemble at the call of the nyana-n-son-na-ba to decide whether or not the soli will be held. If the decision is affirmative, the boys and girls then take steps to make sure that the festival (nyara, "orgy, wedding") will be as elaborate as possible. In principle, the date coincides with the third day of the festival of the sheep.

Guided by their elders, the young girls (soli-ma-moso-u) go from door to door to solicit millet for the banquet (3) which

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3. The menu includes couscous (basi), and it is called soli-kili-basi, "basi of the solicitation for the soli," on account of the source of the millet used to prepare it, solicited by the children.

they are expected to give the elders (koro-u) on the second day of the feast of the sheep. The period of the ceremonies of the soli actually begins with this meal. [241]

In the afternoon of this day, the boys make the customary sacrifice to their genie-protector, dancing in his honor in ceremonial costume but without flagellation.

881 302 On the same day the young girls in certain localities have a characteristic ceremony. One of them whitens her face, breast, and back with a mixture of milk and ashes. Thus daubed, she dashes out of the village brandishing the spatula (to-n-galama) which is used to stir mush (to) in the pot; her companions follow her, shouting. The band goes around the village four times in this fashion, each time stopping at the crossroads. At these points the girl who is bedaubed throws handfuls of food (1), provided by her companions, to the spirits, crying: "Dege dule (2)." Her companions reply: "Naloma (3)."

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1. Usually basi (couscous) made with fish.

2. Literally, "thick mush."

3. That is, "fool."

881 527 [273] [576] The eve of the soli (soli-si). During the evening preceding the soli, the families concerned enjoy an ample meal, accompanied by innumerable jugs of beer (dlo) as is the custom at all festivals among the Bambara. This is a time of special merriment, of shining faces and greasy hands, and it is good form for the men and boys to belch noisily, saying repeatedly: "ne ne fa," literally, "I am full," that is, "I am replete." The [301] women wander about the lanes, wrapped in their best skirts, with balls of amber in their hair and small silver or even gold rings in their ears and nostrils and rather heavy bracelets on their [482] arms and ankles. Some carry jars of dlo on their heads, while others carry gourds full of couscous, dege, or hot sauces which are often nauseous with smoked or spoiled fish. After the meal everyone gathers on the public square, forming a wide circle whose center is reserved for the dancers; piles of dried millet [373] stalks are used to make bright fires which illuminate the scene and warm the audience.

881 302 The "boys of the soli" (soli-ma-tye-u), their heads

881 freshly shaved (4), their bodies rubbed with vegetable butter
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4. Just as their heads were shaved at birth.

(si tlu), [242] arrive in single file. Greeted by the onlookers, they take their places in the front row. Shouts, noisy conversation, and songs are intermingled and make a racket which is interrupted by the arrival of the "girls of the soli" (soli-ma-moso-u). With their hair in a tangle and dressed in short skirts (1)

1. Blue for Moslems and yellowish-brown (basa) for the purely pagan Bambara.

reaching from the navel to the knee, they enter one behind the other, walk around the assemblage, and finally take their places in a group near their mothers and friends.

The assembled men drink around the fires.

881 All the drums are there, and as soon as the girls appear,
533 the drummers rush to their instruments. There are big drums
534 resting on three legs (denu-ba), others which hang from the shoulder, and still others carried under the arm. Young women shake bits of iron (kinge) as one shakes castanets, and there are other iron instruments provided with rings. Old women pound on gourds turned upside down in pots filled with water.

The noise is deafening, and it is dominated by songs in honor of the ancestors shouted by the whole assemblage as loudly as possible. Then the whole crowd, where the tipsy are in the majority and where everyone is at the highest possible pitch of excitement, starts a frenzied dance accompanied by songs usually improvised.

881 While all this is going on, the adepts of the major
789 brotherhood (2) are outside the village, noisily driving out the

2. The Komo around Ségou; the Nama in the Kaarta area.

881 evil genii in order to preserve the "people of the soli" (soli-ma-u)
789 from their bewitchments.

881 The soli. The soli, this make-believe birth, is marked
304 by a bloody operation, circumcision for the boys and excision for the girls. The fact that the ceremony does not get its name from this operation demonstrates that it is merely show; it is merely a rite of separation between the previous state and the new one (3). The operation takes place at dawn.

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3. That is why among other peoples the operation does not exist or represented by a mere slash on the thigh (among the Koniagui).

Boys. The blacksmith who is to circumcise the boys waits outside the village under a tree. Assisted by members [243] of the sects and especially by the Komo-tigi, he performs the operation behind a loincloth hung up as a screen. The boy stands erect, and the blacksmith draws out the prepuce and cuts it off, after having determined approximately the proper place to cut. The patient is expected to show no weakness; on the contrary, he exerts himself to say a few words to show his courage.

As soon as the operation is finished, a gunshot announces the news to the elders crouched about the village fires, and a female griot proclaims it to the bystanders. The Komo-tigi takes a few nyanka leaves, burns them, and goes to place the ashes on the boy's familial kara. The boy runs off to rejoin his companions under the tree especially chosen for this reassembly. All the boys will spend their days there, on the fringe of society with which they are forbidden to mingle. They return to the village only at night, to sleep in a hut reserved for them.

881 A man reputed to know how to care for circumcised
304 boys lives with them, takes care of them, and closely supervises them; this is the sema-tye. Every day abundant food is brought
292 to him for his patients. The latter wear a dloki (blouse) and kursi (trousers) made of cotton cloth, blue or yellow-brown (basa) depending on their affiliations (1), and their headgear is usually

1. The basa color is much in demand

881 304 292

among the Bambara, while the Marka use cloth dyed indigo-blue.

a high cap with strings extending from the earlaps. They can only leave the place where they are assembled, even for the needs of nature, under the leadership of the sema-tye and shaking a stick of wood to which are attached bits of broken pottery. This rattle is called n-koso-m-bara.

881 304 They pass the time plaiting mats, gossiping, laughing, and pestering passers-by. On market days they are permitted to block the paths leading to the village and to collect a tithe from the traders.

The officials of the sects often visit them in their retreat.

Girls. The blacksmiths' wives who are to remove part of the clitoris await the girls outside the village under the trees. Some matrons assist them. Each child in turn runs up to the operator and squeezes herself between [244] the legs of the matron who exposes the clitoris. The excised clitoris is laid [789] in a little woven basket and is carefully preserved for making talismans.

The completion of the operation is announced in the same way as for the boys, and the Komo-tigi likewise puts the ashes from nyanka leaves on the familial kara.

The girl then rejoins her companions in the hut reserved for them in each section of the settlement. There they are under the surveillance of an old woman, the sema-moso, who knows how to take care of them and who sees to it that they behave properly. They are very well fed.

881 Wrapped in skirts, they lean on canes of dried millet stalks when they walk and shake a gourd pierced with holes and [514] filled with pebbles. They go out only for the needs of nature and then all in a body. They warn the passers-by by shaking their rattles and singing improvised songs. As they near paths outside the village, they intone a refrain.

Soli da woro (1). The seclusion of the soli-ma ceases

1. Literally, "sixth day of the soli."

881 on the sixth day. Just as a baby is admitted to the family on the seventh day after its birth, so on the sixth day after the surgical operation which has, as it were, marked the end of childhood, one attains a new status.

881 The sixth day, da woro, is the most important festival of the soli. All the relatives and friends are invited and even 786 the most distant make great efforts to be present. Each one sends or brings his contribution to the orgy-like meals which go on and on, that day and the days following. The fiancés of the girls must be represented and send gifts. Married brothers and sisters must come, bringing their respective wives and husbands. It is an occasion for feasting and drinking, and it goes on as long as the provisions last, i.e., for several days.

881 The essential part of the ceremony, for which everyone has come, takes place on the evening of the sixth day. The onlookers gather in the public square where there will be [245] dancing, but usually only the women and girls remain there; the men and boys go outside for the admittance of the soli-ma-tye to the leading brotherhood of the village (Komoya, Namaya) (1).

1. We shall describe this admittance when we discuss the brotherhoods.

Sometimes, however, there is no separation of the sexes, either because there is no active brotherhood or because the high priest has set a later date for the admittance ceremony.

In any case, the performance within the village is particularly for the girls, soli-ma-moso. Wrapped in a cotton coverlet with blue and white stripes, called dampe, each girl lies between her mother's legs (2) on a white cloth laid upon a

2. Or those of a relative or friend of her mother.

mat.

[534] While the boys, soli-ma-tye, are noisily shaking their rattles, n-koso-m-bara, the girls, soli-ma-moso, flourish their pebble-filled gourds.

881 535 In a compact group, the women and girls of all ages and stations shuffle slowly around the orchestra, while the men drink and sing around small fires of dry millet stalks.

From time to time, upon being invited to do so, one of the girls, soli-ma-moso, gets up, rattles her gourd, and joins the dance with slow, deliberate steps.

At dawn, when they are about to return to their huts, the girls, soli-ma-moso, make one last circuit, and then each one, with her heels together and her hands crossed above her head, makes three leaps into the air. She does this three times.

881 201 The Bambara themselves interpret these various details concerning girls, the soli-ma-moso, as symbolic. The girl's position between her mother's legs recalls physical birth. The white cloth represents the one that at her mother's marriage bore witness to virginity and reminds the girl that she will have to give similar proof to her husband. The dance done with slow, measured steps is the symbol of a child learning to walk, and the nine leaps that close the ceremony attest to the fact that the girl is now an adult. A final rite shows the parallelism between the soli and [246] birth: on the sixth day, the nyana-n-[302] son-na-ba shaves the head of the soli-ma-moso (1).

1. In place of the braided coiffure, young girls wear the magic cord with nine knots, called tafo, on the crown of the head, and this is connected to a similar one, called dyo, at the nape of the neck.

881 End of the soli. On the seventh day, before noon, all the soli-ma-moso go to the well or to the river to wash the soiled clothes and to scour the pots and gourds used for the festival. Then all return to the discipline of the soli: the boys under their tree, and the girls in their huts. The sema watch over the youngsters, who by now are bored with the discipline. About three weeks must pass after the operation before all the soli-ma completely recover.

881 At the end of this time, the nyana-n-son-na-ba and his council having come to an agreement with the sema to end the period of seclusion, each leader performs certain magic passes, under the boys' tree and near the girls' huts, to dispel any evil. The Bambara are convinced that so long as the period of convalescence is not officially closed the circumcised boys or excised girls are as much a danger to society as society is to them; that is why they must spend this period in seclusion. Furthermore, anything used by them during their seclusion is impregnated with this evil and may spread it.

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Therefore, as soon as the interdict is lifted, everything is collected to be burned at sunset (2). Near the trees outside the village the mats, the n-koso-m-bara, the gourds, millet stalks, rags, etc., are all piled up, and the nyana-n-son-na-ba sets them afire. The boys and girls jump over the fire three times; they are then free to return to the village. They run home promptly to adorn themselves for the festival celebrating their return.

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2. However, personal effects (the boys' kursi, dloki, and baufla, and the girls' tafe) are not burned; along with their stains, these are impregnated with virtues which make them particularly valuable for talismans, amulets, and other magic weapons.

881 Once more there are lavish meals and interminable drinking bouts, followed by a general gathering in the public square. People come from all directions, among them appallingly decrepit old women who try to manage everything. [247]

[291] On this occasion, the boys, soli-ma-tye, appear for the first time in true man's attire, full trousers, cap with earlaps, and an ample new shirt. With lance in hand, they swagger about and simulate the behavior of warriors; they are now tye-kura, "new men."

881 301 The girls also are decked out to excess in women's attire. Wearing several skirts and adorned with all the jewelry relatives

[88] and friends have kindly lent for the occasion, they advance
[301] shyly. In some areas, notably in the Bani region, they wear bundles of cowries, from the bride price already paid for them, around the hips and hanging on each side of the head (1).

[302 17]

1. Bambara girls who have gone through the soli have their heads shaved. Among other peoples, on the contrary, girls have their hair braided like women for the first time, but to the braid is added a tuft of the hair shaved off seven days after birth; this hair has usually been lost, but a small tuft is made to simulate it.

[88] Boys and girls, following the old women who lead them,
[535] dance around the orchestra, and then all sit down in a circle. The nyana-n-son-na-ba takes the floor. He speaks in a low voice, and, as is proper, his words are repeated in a loud voice by a herald. He proclaims the end of the soli, recalls its principal events, and indicates clearly which children have participated in the rite; each boy and girl is specifically named. He will also be sure to point out that the soli is an immemorial cus-
[578] tom among the Bambara and that there is no worse insult than to treat a Bambara as uncircumcised. He closes by inviting everyone to eat, drink, and celebrate in the joy and harmony appropriate to such a festival.

[535] Dancing is resumed, and the boys and girls of the soli take part. The festivities continue as long as the refreshments last, usually several days.

To end it all, no one leaves without giving at least a few kola nuts to the heroes of the festival, the boys and girls.

The last phase is the thanks given by the soli-ma to those who assisted at the da-woro. In noisy bands, boys and girls dash about the village in two distinct groups. The girls' group is headed by the soma-moso who is called masa (queen), followed by the masa-ma-kono (vice-queen) and the masa-ma-kono-segere [248] (follower of the vice-queen); the last girl in the

881 group is called kule. In the same way, the boys go about in a group headed by the sema-tye, called masa (king), followed by the masa-ma-kono, the masa-ma-kono-segere, etc.

In this way, the whole country learns which boys and girls have completed the soli.

The Fla-n-ton'

561 572 575 Those who have belonged to the same n-Tomo-ya and have gone through the soli together remain bound together for life; they are fula-ni ("peers," "twins") because they were born on the same day to sexual and social life. Wherever they may be and whatever their respective rank, two fula-ni consider themselves equals even if one of them is a chief and the other a slave; the latter in particular has the right to speak his mind without fear (1). Theoretically, therefore, the fula-ni is the friend on

1. See in Chapter 7, "The Man with Three Braids." [Not translated.]

whom one may safely rely, and he is usually a member of the council, small but very powerful, which every fa likes to have around. It is to him that the fa confides his troubles, his joys, his plans, and his personal affairs. He is present at all the celebrations and mourning of the family. On serious or important occasions, he represents his friend who often entrusts him with the supervision of his household during an absence and appoints him guardian or trustee of his children after his death. He is a brother who may be loved more than agnate or uterine brothers. At the same time the fulani-ya does not necessarily produce a type of brotherhood analogous to that brought about by the blood pact. Rather, it engenders a kind of mutual assistance which is strengthened by the organization called fla-n-ton', "assemblage of people of the same age," i.e., those "born" at the same soli.

The young people from the same soli form a fla-m-bolo, literally, a band of persons of the same age.

856
the blacksmith. The doll is given the name of the dead infant, the
[304 child carries it with him to the circumcision, and, when he marries,
589 he buries the doll with a piece of wood representing the wife of the deceased.

845 Twins are replicas of Faro, their presence is beneficial, and they are considered invulnerable.

826 The albino is supposed to be the issue of sexual relations held
833 in sunlight, a breach of taboo. He, too, is a new being. His wanzo
904 is so active that the circumciser must take great precautions before operating on it.

826 He is considered to be endowed with special powers which
782 make him a choice victim for the sacrifices offered to the spirit of the water.

553 To the children of blacksmiths, the name is given near the
326 paternal forge in the presence of all the artisans. An old man prepares seven little sticks, giving each the name of an ancestor. Three of these are drawn at random from the group, and the third gives the name of the baby. The head of the baby is rubbed with the axe Kongobwona, and his shaved hair is soaked in sacrificial blood.

553 In the Bamako region two chickens or a sheep are sacrificed
782 to celebrate the name-giving. The distribution of the meat is made according to established custom. If it is a chicken, the patriarch receives the head and the gizzard, while the wing and white meat go to the old woman who washed the baby during the first eight days. If it is a sheep, the patriarch receives [91] the ribs (because they are a bulwark, and the patriarch is the defender of the village) and the heart; the blacksmith receives the shoulder; the infant's family gets the head (so that the infant will go ahead), the back (symbol of prosperity), and the limbs (supports one wishes the new-born to have); the blood which runs on the ground is destined for the infant's protective ancestors. Then the family divides the raw meat with the heads of family, and the old woman thus receives her part indirectly.

c. Circumcision

881 A male infant is born, but he still keeps (because of the
304 primordial twinship) the prepuce as the physical support of the female
831 sex. He will only be freed of this by circumcision. It is this operation that definitively determines his sexual qualification and renders him fit to contract marriage.

½ [i.e., the surviving child of twins. -Analyst]

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794 The society of n'Domo has the task of preparing children for circumcision; the wanzo of the child liberated by the operation goes in the mask of the n'Domo.

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304 Formerly, circumcision took place between 18 and 20 years of age, and the circumcised had to bear arms the following year. At present, the children are circumcised between 8 and 16 years of
[561] age, but all those of the same promotion are considered to belong to the same age class and are flani [sic] (twins) all their lives.

The ritual of circumcision has been described many times, in particular by Tauxier and G. Dieterlen. Therefore we will only report the essential phases.

The ceremony takes place during the dry season, in bountiful years after the harvest. The appearance of the constellation "Sigi-lolo" is watched for at a certain point in the sky, and when it is very brilliant, the date is fixed. The operation cannot take place except every three years.

The parents prepare for the ceremony long in advance: they make the child a bonnet of white cloth which they present to the Niger, and they make the signs representing the person of the child with earth from the river. Some days before the operation, the child enters into a period of seclusion; he is placed under the protection of the purifying light of Faro and receives gifts (cowries, food ....).

When the day arrives, his hair is shaved off. His mother washes his shaft with water in which an iron axe has been soaked, then has him eat a plate of rice.

The blacksmith prepares his knife, boloko kumba moru, which is enclosed in an iron sheath, this knife represents the circumcised and the prepuce which will be taken from him. The priest washes the handle and, symbolically, the penis. Then with coal or with millet paste he traces the blade with ritual designs symbolizing the three first circumcised men, the four first excised women, and the bird which is the avatar of the eight ancestral blacksmiths. Next, he ties the prepuce with a small cord (drawn on the middle of the blade) and places it on the pembelé. The cutting knife is hit with a small block of wood, and the blacksmith then traces the scarifications on the shaft. The circumcised bleed in a circle on the ground, in individual holes [92] dug between their legs. They thus deliver the wanzo to the impure earth, while the circumciser recites the prayers. Then they apply a dressing of bloody earth to the wound,

881 and the member is held up by a split millet stalk. The prepuces are
304 buried, and their white bonnets are put on the circumcised. The place of the operation is forbidden to women and to the non-circumcised who could take the liberated wanzo.

In the Bamako region the blood of the oldest is gathered in
[534] two new calabashes, which are later broken and the pieces used to make sistrums, sinzin.

881 After the ceremony, the children retire for three months under the direction of a priest of the Komo. During this period, when they receive a religious and technical education, they enter the village only to sleep in a special house and to repair the roofs of their teachers' huts.

[794] The night before the sixth day after the operation, they are initiated in the Komo. The next day they are led to the river where they wash their wound. Meals are taken together, followed by songs and dances, until they are healed. The last day, the sistrums, sticks, mats, and everything that has been in contact with the circumcised are put in a pile and burned. Each child jumps over the fire three times and runs home, without turning around, to lose his wanzo definitively. In the Bamako region the sistrums are preserved in the cabin of the village chief and will be used for the children of the following years. The bonnet is returned to the mother and will be preserved until death. The next day the child puts on his new clothes.

881 Let us note that for the circumcision of twins all the offerings
304 for the ceremony and the sacrifices must be doubled, and each child
826 will possess two sistrums. Finally, the albinos today are sent to the dispensary, because the blacksmiths are afraid to operate on them, their wanzo being particularly dangerous.

304 Circumcision may take place posthumously. The circumciser
766 then cuts the left ear of the body, since the wanzo freed by death would be dangerous to the living.

794 Generally, a sort of ceremony of confirmation of membership in the Komo takes place in the year following the circumcision.

d. Excision

881 The excision of the girls has a meaning equivalent to that
304 [831] of the circumcision of the boys. The operation frees them of the physical male factor residing in the clitoris.

physical male factor residing in the clitoris. The operation takes place, moreover, during the same period as the circumcision. It is carried out by the potteress, wife of the blacksmith, in full daylight before the assembled kin. During their seclusion the girls wear a white veil which plays the same role as the bonnet of the circumcised. Instead of the sistrum, the girls shake a gourd which contains eight millet seeds and cotton fibers which their fiancés have given them. A goat is sacrificed for the ceremony. The collected blood is given to the fiancé in honor of his ancestors who become those of the girl.

[93] On the last day of the ceremony the girls definitively rid themselves of their wanzo by jumping over a pyre composed of the clothes and scraps of the excised.

e. Marriage

It is only after having been circumcised or excised that young people may marry. The institution of marriage is regulated by a ritual which has often been described, particularly by Amar, Monteil, Tauxier, Aubert . . .

The marriage arrangements are made by the respective fa of the two betrothed, after the young people have been consulted. The request is officially made to the parents by an intermediary, a man of caste or a sénanku. It is accompanied by ritual gifts offered to the fa of the girl. In the Bougouni region the request is accompanied by ten kola nuts, because ten is a complete number that designates good events and future births. (Nine kola nuts are offered to present condolences, four as a sign of greeting. To send three nuts would be insulting, and 19 nuts, marking incompleteness, would be a sign of lack of confidence.) The first kola nuts to be offered are always wrapped in one or two karite leaves, symbol of life and of fecundity. If the ten kola nuts are accepted, it means that the father has opened the way to the marriage. The intermediary then make a second trip the following week, bringing a cock for sacrifice to the ancestors and ten more kola nuts; during a third trip he offers another cock and ten more kola nuts before the entire assembled family of the young girl, witnessing that the girl may meet her fiancé. In the course of the fourth trip, the intermediary leads the girl to the fiancé's family, where she will be confided to the wife of the head of the family who will undertake her education.

545 Example:
794 Tiekoroba kolili (the old man who has nothing)
522 Ita rokina momindi (what you say is not liked)
Ida konieti aie (you are right)
N'ka idia dopina marmandi (but one doesn't like what you say)
Or again:
Demise fentili (the rich young man)
Ida dokma kakadi (one likes what you say)
Ida konie tinaie (what you say is not true)
N'ka idia dokma makadi (but one likes what you say)

545 The Kworéduga have the su (Moor) as taboo, and they accom-
534 pany themselves in singing with a sacred gourd, yaraba, which con-
794 tains seeds of Lufa cilindrica.

536 Finally, during the circumcision initiation period for example,
881 the child learns the sacred dances which often mime exploits of the mythical ancestors.

177 A certain evolution characterizes the native art which has
517 been transformed in a curious fashion by contact with Europeans. In European centers, prolonged contact with the Whites has confused the beliefs that inspired the art, but the artists have lost neither their taste nor their gifts. At the request of the Whites themselves, they have undertaken a controlled art, with the aim of pleasing the Europeans. Needless to say, even if it conserves some charm in its form, all this new art, which evolves with the same swift rhythm as our modes, remains terribly dead, for the true source of inspiration has dried up. This art no longer seeks to be true, but to be pretty; by this it signs its own death warrant.

[109] CONCLUSION

I. Traditional Interpretation of Mental Characteristics

181 In the introduction to Religion Bambara, Tauxier insists on the mental characteristics: "The Bambara has remained rather openly fetishist"; he possesses "two dominant traits, which are absolutely undisputed and indisputable:

"1. He is a very good farmer.

304 grown up they are allowed complete freedom as to whether they undergo the operation or not. For fear of the pain and of letting a sigh or tears escape them and becoming the laughing stock of the whole village, many children of ten to fifteen years refuse (1).

1. Male children that are not tattooed usually have their ears pierced.

Bambara tattoos are simple and not at all ugly when well done. Although it disfigures some, leaving lumps as big as a thumb on their cheeks and chest, such an accident is /174/ extremely unusual, considering the number of those tattooed. They use no unclean substances to dry their wounds and make them swell, charcoal powder being the only medicine used in tattooing.

304 178 Although this practice is being lost around Ségou, and many families no longer want it for their children, it is nevertheless not on the verge of disappearing entirely and completely. To remove a religious practice from an entire people takes years, centuries, and if a famous sorcerer came and ordered it for those who dispense with it, they would undergo it at once.

Chapter 9

Circumcision in Bambara Country

1. The Importance of Circumcision

● 881 304 The important act in the life of the Bambara man and woman -- both sexes are mutilated -- is unquestionably circumcision. And whence did they get this custom? Some people settle the question with one word: "It is of Mohammedan origin." I refrain from being so categorical, for the Bambara have always rejected Islam, they have

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defended their gods with spear in hand, and I can find in their circumcision nothing which resembles the religion of the Prophet in the slightest. For the Bambara, circumcision is not only the seal of the tribe, it is also a second birth, the entrance into civil and religious life.

It is the occasion for four great festivals. On the second day of the festival which corresponds to the Moslem festival of the كبش (sheep), those about to be circumcised, who are given the special name of soli, offer to the to-n-déou, or members of the mutual aid society, fla-n-ton, a very fine couscous called basi. To obtain it, they have had to go begging and singing from door to door (kili), whence the name soli kili basi, which is given to this festival. Before going under the knife, all the soli make a vigil of arms. The soli kili basi is followed by the soli si (1), and six days later the da woro

1. Si, "spend the night."

is held. When the circumcised boys and excised girls are healed, the drums roll again, /176/ more drinking bouts are organized, and the boloko déou don bo, the coming out of the circumcised, takes place (1).

1. From boli, "hand," "arm" (veiled terms designating the sex organs); ko, "wash"; deou, plural of de, "child," "son"; don, "day"; bo, "to come out."

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During the days between the festival of Ramadan (2) and the

2. Under Moslem domination, the Bambara had to observe the festivals of Ramadan and of the كبش, (sheep). They have become national festivals with sacrifices to the shades of ancestors and to the good fetishes. The observances do not include a single Moslem rite . . . .

festival of the sheep كمشن , the little soli girls, those chosen for the next circumcision, go with their still unmarried older sisters to thank the elders for the honor which has been done them. In the evening, at nightfall, they visit the families and in a nasal song recall the glories of their ancestors. They also have the most flattering words for those still living, and it all ends with this plea: "We are soli and haven't a penny! On the tenth day of the next moon we must offer you a fine "couscous" with very small grains, the basi, and we want a good sauce. Help us in this, I beg you, we are soli without a penny."

The songs of the soli remind the old men and women of their younger days, the days of their youth, and they run to the granary, search the gourds that they use as cupboards, unlace the long roll of close-packed straw where the cowrie shells are piled, and the young people leave triumphantly, rich in cowrie shells, millet, and decayed fish. The proceeds of the quest are entrusted to the oldest of the soli, and, on the second day of the festival of the sheep, our belles gather, grind furiously, and provide the whole village with its ration, basi kili, which is the name of the festival.

On the stroke of noon and even before, everybody is fed and is eagerly tasting the sorghum /sic/ beer, d'lo, and the soli girls run from one house to another to gather the leftovers from the feast. They do it hurriedly, eagerly, and feverishly, for they are impatient to perform their great religious, public, and solemn act, and at the soli kili basi they are the cooks and servants of the spirits.

The latter /spirits/ stay at the outskirts of villages, invisible, and drag the soles of their feet along the paths of yawn as they crouch /177/ at the crossroads. The songs of happiness, the cries of joy, the hiccups of the drinkers, and the deafening noise of the bass drums split their eardrums, the scent of decayed fish swells their nostrils, and no doubt, between two sighs, as they lick their lips with their tongues, they say to themselves in a murmur which the wind carries away: "Oh! the gluttons, they are forgetting us!"

But not at all -- they are remembered! A little soli girl smears her face, breasts, and back with milk, ashes, also and with other things whose names I do not know; she makes herself hideous to behold,

[881] as ugly as possible, and plays the fool. Armed with a long stick -- the stick which is used to stir the gruel that is simmering on the fire (1) -- she darts out of the village, agile as a gazelle. Her companions

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1. To-n-galama: a stick with a large, flattened end, used to stir gruel in the pot.

all chase her at a full run, giving many shouts; they circle around the walls four times. At every fork in the path they form a circle, dance with frenzy, and throw large handfuls of basi and smoked fish sauce to the spirits without keeping count. "Dégé dounlé, idiots," shouts the smeared girl, and all her retinue repeats with ever increasing enthusiasm: "Nalouma, big fool...." And this day, which is not very edifying, is full of delights for the little Bambara girls who are to be excised.

The little soli boys are satisfied with sacrificing to n'tomo, a good fetish which is their protector, but although they dance wearing masks with six, seven, and sometimes eight horns, they do not [785] flagellate themselves, or at least flagellation is not required on this day.

2. The Soli Si Festival, or the Vigil of the Circumcised

Here we are on the eve of the circumcision! It is black night, d'lo, or sorghum /sic/ beer, hums and foams in the earthenware bowls, and a thin mist comes out of all the huts and envelops them. Here karité grease sputters as it melts in the pot and browns the skin of a chicken or the leg of a goat; there one hears the loud laughter of people with full stomachs, the hiccups of a glutton, the dry and decisive sound of two heavy lips releasing five great /178/ sticky fingers glued to each other by a remainder of gruel. Their foreheads [301] decorated with beads in a kind of crown of white, red, and yellow, [291] the colors of the rainbow, and their bodies draped in blankets, Roman style, groups of women glide silently like shadows along the alleys, carrying on their heads huge gourds full of dégé, millet flour mixed with honey water and milk.

[88] with honey water and milk. They go to the public square, the only ballroom known in Bambara country. The big boys, their heads freshly shaved and their bodies thoroughly greased and all shining, also arrive in a long line, and in the square there is nothing but indescribable bedlam, for all these people at once greet each other, talk and shout, and not a voice is in harmony.

[82] Young and old consult the canopy of stars, for although they are not astronomers they know that around midnight a certain star of the firmament is at such and such an angle, and they are impatient. Then the hour has come, and the male soli are crouched in the place of honor, and the young lady soli arrive in single file, their hair in disorder and their hips girded with paltry loincloths that reach from the knees up to the navel. The loincloths are gifts from the fiancé [292] of each one, and must be worn. Their colors vary, indicating the tribe and caste of each girl, so one can see that they are of some importance (1).

1. The Moslems have blue. The pure Bambara wants a yellow background with black rose shapes and lines.

[186] A Bambara woman is proud of her blood and proud of her tribe, and, wearing her loincloth in the national colors, a narrow cloth band of black stripes on a yellow background, she almost thinks she is a queen, if not a goddess, at the soli si. The girls' gait reflects this feeling: with heads high, eyes 15 paces ahead, chests stuck out like Prussians (they puff themselves up a little to bring out their charms), they admire themselves and are enraptured, each knowing that she is the focus of more than one shining eye full of desire. They advance slowly, raising a cloud of dust, and in her hands each one shakes a bag of goatskin and an iron box filled with little pebbles; her torso bends to the left and bends to the right. In the dark of the night as the little fires /179/ cast their gleams here and there, one might say that they are frail shells lost in the waves and tossed by the winds, struck by the swell and always ready to capsize.

881 534 Shouting -- and that is an understatement, the young people throw themselves onto their instruments, which are drums of every shape and size. Some, the bass drums, are carried on the abdomen and fastened to the waist by a bark cord; others, smaller but longer, are slid between the legs or under the arms, and tambourines, hung from the neck, swing at the level of the navel as a new kind of pendant. The old women with toothless jaws join in; they scrape two iron rods together or create syncapation by furiously beating on an inverted gourd floating in a conari full of water with a piece of wood or a pumpkin stem.

881 Virgins, married women, widows, prostitutes (all mingling) slowly circle again and again around the orchestra behind the soli, shaking in their hands the bags of goatskin or boxes of white iron, and until morning every boy that is to be circumcised and every girl to be excised hears the glories and feats of his lineage. There is nothing very lofty about these songs containing thousands and thousands of wishes; although there is a feeling of passion in them, there is no love; beauty of the heart is lacking, and all is badly told. The men also from time to time leave the jug and mingle in the dance, but the night belongs to the women. And it belongs to the gods. If, tired of the bedlam, you leave the ball and go outside the village to breathe a little fresh air, you hear the piercing cries of the herald of the gods, you even see him in the darkness, running from one tree [292] to another; with horns on his head and a coat decorated with feathers of hens, guinea fowl, egrets (1), etc., he looks like those story demons

1. This is the costume worn by Negroes when they dance the dance of the Komo fetish.

which grandmothers depict so well in the late evenings.

[789] And this herald of the gods, with his retinue, is performing a curious rite: he is chasing out the evil spirits and clearing a place for the favorite god of the village so as to drive away sorcery from the circumcised and the excised. /180/ In Bambara this is called kéné sâlo (1) and can be translated into French as "exorcising the place."

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1. Kéné, "public place," "court"; salo, "to stroke gently with the hand," "to make gestures."

One after the other the stars of the firmament go out, and only the morning star (sigi dolo) still shines, seeming to defy the dawn. Many "kouyô kouyô," shouted from a hundred throats, rise from the village, and the square is emptied. Everybody (I mean the women, for the squatting men keep on drinking and stirring the fire) rushes out of the village and forms a circle around the sacred karité tree. With his back against the tree, separated from the crowd by a white cloth, a blacksmith is kneeling rather than sitting and, razor in hand, awaiting the victims. He is calm, sure of himself, and not afraid; after all, it is quickly done. He grasps the foreskin, recites his formula as he spits, and the iron is raised, throws a gleam, and falls. A gunshot announces to the drinkers on the square that there is one more Bambara in the village, and while a woman storyteller /griotte/ applauds him, the owner of the god burns a few nayanka (2) leaves

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2. A tree whose name in French I do not know.

between two brands, and feverishly and eagerly goes to place the ashes on the kara, the altar dedicated to the shades of the ancestors (3), in the court of the one who was circumcised or excised.

3. This is the procedure wherever the Komo fetish is found. In the circle of Ségou a Komo is almost always the one appealed to, and if none is owned in the village, it is brought from a neighboring village for the occasion.

881 Limping, the circumcised go under the sacred trees where the dances in honor of the fetish are held, and that is where they stay

881 until they are completely healed; for it is not until evening, when the setting sun reddens the horizon and takes on its bloody hue that they re-enter the village. From this day on they wear a costume (all yellow if they are Bambara) of trousers, a blouse, and on their heads a kind of handkerchief tied under the chin (4). They pass the time in

4. In some villages, instead of the yellow handkerchief the circumcised have a cap with two points. In Bani country the circumcised wear the blouse and handkerchief, or cap, and nothing more.

making mats, singing, striking together gourd disks strung on a stick, and especially in eating, "for they are being stuffed," and in sleeping. /181/

881 But in speaking of the boys, I forgot the little girls! They undress under the tree nearest to the sacred karité. Naked as a worm, 304 each one when her turn comes runs at top speed with her abdomen to the ground and throws herself into the arms of a woman, also of the blacksmith caste, who immediately cuts her. On a braided platter, made of fine, pliable grass, the mother or her substitute receives the 415 bloody fragment which will be a grigri, a talisman or good-luck 789 charm for the house, and while the gunpowder speaks, the disabled girl, pretending not to be suffering at all from the loss of her clitoris, goes back to her place, and another replaces her.

881 The session ends with the last girl, and the crowd breaks out in a song of joy and triumph. The mother, the eldest sister, or a serving woman wraps the excised girl in a big white cloth and carries her astride her back to the village to the hut which has been prepared for her (1). This carrying, so laughable in itself (they can walk, even

1. Each village is divided into quarters. The excised girls of each quarter have their hut in that quarter.

881 run, as they have demonstrated under the karité tree), is the part of whole festival which is most reminiscent of a child, and of the function of the circumcision. It is the second birth, and just as the infant appears in public for the first time on the back of her mother, so she again enters the civil and religious life on the back of her mother or of the woman who takes her place.

The excised girls do very little in their huts, and like the boys, they yawn, sleep, and eat. However, they spin a little cotton and very often sing in a low voice while they practice gracefully shaking a gourd the size of a fist, pierced with little holes and filled with small pebbles. They lead a very easy life, and one might think they were happy, but a toothless old woman who is always grumbling watches over them. This is a great nuisance! It is impossible to move, impossible to wiggle a toe; one must have permission for everything, and it is never granted gracefully. The wants of nature must be satisfied in a group and at stated hours.... When the girls go through the village, they lean, in accordance with custom, on a millet stalk at the end of which is hung the perforated gourd in which little pebbles rattle. /182/

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On the way out as they go into the bush, they sing to the gnâma to protect themselves from them:

Bo n'yé, gnâma, ô gnâma,
Go away from me, gnâma, ô gnâma,
Dankoun ba la,
Of the great corner of land (1),

1. The corner of land formed by two paths that cross, the place where the gnâma dwell. /The slight discrepancy between the translations of the song given here and in Chapter 1, Section 3, is present in the original French. Ed./

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Gnâma fambali, bo n'yé!
Murderer gnâma (who kills), go away from me!

And coming back they sing songs and even improvise some to greet the old and influential men of the village. Back in their huts they kneel on the mat to stretch out or sit down, and there is silence, the silence of schoolgirls which is not broken except in secret, with trembling and in a low voice.

3. The Da Woro Festival, or the Sixth Day Festival

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Boys and girls have paid the tribute of blood to the tribe, five days have already elapsed, and this is the evening before the sixth. Far over there in the west the sun has disappeared behind the heavy baobab trees that border the horizon, myriads of stars twinkle in the sky, and the moon, followed by Venus (Kolo mouso, Niélé, "Niélé, wife of the moon"), traces on a blue background its silver crescent singed with a gold border.

All the paths that lead to the village are full of people walking, seeming like an endless ribbon or a snake that folds back on itself only to stretch out suddenly. Behind the band of young girls walk the women, each with a black cherub on her back that always wakes up to cry and demand the breast; and to them the girls have entrusted their little loincloths, the cloth slings with which they gird themselves for the dance. The girls walk quickly, for although they carry on [482] their heads tall pyramids of gourds held in nets of large mesh, although they carry the fiancé's present to the queen of his heart -- salt; dégé, or millet flour mixed with honey water and milk; d'lo, or sorghum /sic/ beer; millet and dried fish in which worms crawl; they are confortable in their clothing; /183/ nothing hinders their movements except a narrow cloth band three fingers wide which passes between the legs, is fastened at the waist in front, and waves in back in a limp and soft train. And in the night there is the rustling of dry grass trodden under foot; /there are/ long peals of laughter, light jibes that are well aimed and to the point, and witticisms, for the maiden's tongues have been loosened, and they do not lack wit.

196 The youths follow, dressed in blouses knotted at the abdomen
• 88| like towels and trousers into which three pairs of legs and three abdomens could fit without any trouble, dragging drums and bass drums. To keep up the march and cause it to be forgotten (they often come from far away) they shout a loud "you you" and make coarse jokes, which are here addressed to the fair sex more than elsewhere. Sometimes also, between two laughs, two great silly laughs, something like the crack of a whip is heard. This sound is made by five stubby fingers as they are applied to the cheeks of dear little angels, warming them. In fact, a band of little boys and girls trot among the youths in their birthday suits, passing to the right and to the left and winding between their legs, and patience wears out and quickly comes to an end.

After the young people come the old men; they are bent double, leaning on spears, and even while talking of future projects they recall the days of the past. It is quite apparent that there are no more like them, their equal cannot be found. Into the foroko, the goatskins they slip over their arms and fasten on their shoulders, they have slipped some good handfuls of cowrie shells for the mothers of the circumcised
[276 and excised, a box of the snuff that every self-respecting stranger
431] gives as a gift to the men of the village, and finally the kola nuts that the sacrificer will chew before spitting the remains onto the front side of the god and some that, as educated, well-bred men, they keep for close friends. They also carry the hens or roosters for the sacrifice; these are attached by the feet to the straps of the foroko and hung head down their wings flapping horribly.

88| The human flood arrives at the gates of the village, stops a
moment under the big trees, and tidies itself. The pointed caps /184/
796 are put a little to one side of the head, the blouses are unfolded, and
301 nakedness is concealed. On the women's side there is indescribable hubbub, like the sound of the distant ocean at rising tide; they polish and adorn themselves and beautify themselves. On their feet they put little chains, on their arms heavy bracelets that knock together with the sound of old iron, and on their hips the young girls at least hang belts of beads sprinkled with little bells that tinkle at the slightest movement. In their noses they put crescents of gold or copper, in

881 each ear ten to twelve rings of soft iron, tin, or silver, and those that
796 they put on their fingers and toes number more than twenty.
301 On the braids of their hair, all running with grease, they hang bits of amber and rings of polished pottery as white as snow, and around all their necks are bead necklaces from which dangle bits of amber, grigris, and here and there, held by leather strips, pottery rings that fall back between the shoulders and in front on their bosoms. They also bind their foreheads with narrow crowns of rainbow-colored beads or diadems of coral. Such are the Negro girls in their most beautiful array.

796 At the homes of the circumcised and excised, the huts and
881 courts are crowded with people, for in addition to friends and story-tellers /griots/ -- the poor troubadours of the country -- there may be in each home older married daughters who have come with their husbands, children, and parents-in-law, and the fiancé's delegation to his betrothed seem to be in every corner. This is really the festival of the tribe, and everybody is present; only the fiancés are excluded and cannot appear on this day. And how very Bambara it is! In one
[264] spot people quench their thirst with great drinks of d'lo, or millet beer, while nearby, squatted around steaming gourds, others stuff themselves with to, or gruel. The hands held out to you are running with sauce; the children who surround you are covered with leftovers from the feast and brandish under your nose bones that they gnaw clean with their bare teeth, and while they call to you Sogo ("some meat"), the satiated people next to you exclaim: "Abarka, thank you Né fara san, I am full for the moment." And everywhere there is an infernal bedlam! Old women beat furiously on inverted pumpkins in conari full of water /185/; youths beat drums, women and young girls clap their hands in rhythm, and everybody shouts the glories of the family. The families of the circumcised and excised are beside
[431] themselves, so great is their joy, and if you are one of their close friends you will be shown all the gifts received, in plain sight in the court. You are made to taste of everything, to touch and feel everything, and, just as on the day when the child is given its name, you receive, on leaving, the kola nut of life (le ni woro).

881 796 794 It is after midnight. The circumcised boys are seated in the place of honor where their older brothers sat before, and they furiously shake their gourd disks strung on sticks. Leaning on their millet stalks, the regulation sticks, the excised girls in their turn arrive at the public square, singing and shaking their pierced gourds, and the dances begin as at the soli si and continue until morning. Outside, under the sacred trees, the bell of the fetish tinkles and summons the initiates, and the Komo god roars through the mouth of its herald. At a sign from the priest the circumcised boys get up, leave the village, and go under the big trees to swear loyalty and to dedicate themselves, body and soul, to the prince of darkness (1). How can

1. The scene which I describe sometimes takes place the evening before. Sometimes, by order of a sorcerer and for a reason considered serious, the entrance into the sect of a fetish is postponed until later.

this scene be described! The circumcised boys sit under the god's favorite tree, and the crowd of initiates, grouped by villages, gather around the gourds full of d'lo that froths and bubbles. Little fires are lighted and cast a strange light into the night, and a circle of crouching human beings appears and takes shape. The master of the idol (Komo tigi); the sacrificer (mourou kala tigi); the beadle (darotigi), who rings for the sacrifice and gathers the initiates; the fetish's storytellers /griots/ (Komo djeli maou), who sing the praises of the god, fall into catalepsy at the sacrifices and then give out oracles; [778 534] the Komo warada, who wear a coat covered with the feather of guinea hens, hens, egrets, etc., and a long horned mask, and who carry the fetish to the place of sacrifice and blow into an iron tube that ends in two horns /186/ and is at once idol and trumpet, and draw from it frightful "fouin fouin" that freeze you with fear: in short, all the staff of the Komo appear on the scene, and there is a lascivious dance, the dance of the god, the sacred dance. Then there is the

881 796 794 rallying cry, bellowed by a hundred throats, "kou kou kou, ke ke ke"; drums roll, and drunken voices shout:

T'an ta bara ladjé.
Stop, let us go and see the gourd (of beer).
Bara ma dja an na,
When the beer has made us joyful (1),

1. Dja, "to make happy,"
"to please," "to be agreeable,"
"to make joyful."

An na youyouba yougouba.
We will dance and dance (2).

2. Yougouba, "to dance with a shaking of the whole body."

Gnâ tigi, né ka nougouni-n-ko min yé?
Master of the gnâ, what has happened to my (hen's) entrails? (3)

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3. This line recalls a peculiarity of the sacrifice of the newly initiated. With one twist of the finger the sacrificer takes the entrails out of the hen, and when the young initiate wants to draw it, he is quite surprised to find that none of the viscera are in it any more.

Gnâ tigi do nougou na bo gnouan yé.
A master of the gnâ (kodit) the entrails will come out together.

Excited, or rather irritated, by the wait, the circumcised boys get up, move forward in a line, and prostrate themselves before the god's escort, the one who shakes without any rest under his cloak of feathers and brings resounding blasts from his horned tube (4), and

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4. While the trumpet is blowing, the initiates accompany it with pipes.

grows and shrinks by raising and lowering his jointed mask. The hour of the initiation has rung, and they will be born into the religious life.

The master of the idol, the Komo tigi, places the horned iron tube on each initiates shoulder, and in a slow, solemn, hollow voice, he says these words of the initiation ceremony (5):

5. During this ceremony the initiates are prostrate.

For the Komo

Q. Moun bé i koun? What have you on your head?
A. A kala be n'koun. His handle is on my head (repeated three times). /187/
Q. I y'a yé wa? Have you seen him?
A. Né m'a yé. I have not seen him.
Q. Nin be ma fa. I y a fo ma min yé, a k'i fo! He kills a man. If you speak of him to anyone, may he kill you!
A. Ni ne y'a fo ma min yé, a k'a né fa! If I speak of him, may he kill me!
Q. I si sirila gnâma-n-fou, djala la. Your life is fastened onto the cedar with gnâma-n-fou!
A. Né si sirila à la. My life is bound to it.
Q. Ni se ma fo ma si yé, Komo k'i kisi! If you do not speak of him to anyone, may the Komo be your protector!
A. A ka né kisi! May he be my protector!
Q. I y'a fo ma min ye, i kono ka founou, a k'i fa! If you speak of it, may your abdomen swell, may he kill you!
A. A ka né fa! May he kill me!
Q. Komo k'i son ni bien (1) ta, ki koun ti, né kana bo djoli kana bo.

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1. Bien, a woman's sexual organs. Bien, "horn"; this is a veiled term sometimes meaning a man's organs. They also say k'i bien ta, "may he tear out the organs."

May the Komo take away your heart and your organs, may he crush your head without your brains coming out, without your blood coming out.

A. O k'a ké. May it be so.

For the Nama

Q. I y'a fo ma min ye, Boli k'i so ta, k'i bien ta (1), ka doun i

/1. Same as preceding footnote 1/

djoufé ka bo i da fé. If you speak of him, may the boli cause your house and your wives to perish, may he enter you by the anus and leave you by the mouth.

A. O k'a ké! May it be so!

Q. K'i Kono gni bri, ka gni bri, gna bara.

A. O k'a ké.

Q. Ni e ma fo ma yé, k'i disi soubaou ma. K'i son sila, k'i son kénéyala! If you keep the secret may he save you from the souba, may he give you descendants and health!

"Tell me, what have you on your head? Yourlife is henceforth bound with gnâma-n-fou (bark of Bauhinia reticulata): if you talk, /188/ if you reveal our mysteries, may your abdomen swell, may the Komo kill you, may he tear out your organs, may he tear out your heart, may he break your head without your brain coming out, without blood flowing."

This ceremony in the night, in the light of the little fires that distort the shadows and lengthen them, impresses, pierces, and grips the youths, and they are heard to answer all atremble in these words that at every moment break through the nasal tone of the pipes and

881 796 794 the trumpet blasts: "I have the kala (1) on my head, my life is hence-

1. Kala, "handle of a tool," "a pestle," "an oblong object"; Komo kala, iron tube ending in two horns.

forth bound with gnâma-n-fou; if I reveal the secrets of the sect, may my abdomen swell and may the Komo kill me." Then they get up, 881 and the crowd of initiates sing hymns to the Komo at the tops of their 796 voices:
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539 Da Woro la nana, Boloko déou da Worola.
To the festival of Da Woro he (the fetish) has come, to Da Woro of the circumcised (he has come).
Toro ma na kola gnini.
Toro (2) has not come to cause evil.

2. Toro, the name of a Komo.

Sira bo nin ye, ko dougoulé dén.
To him we give an (open) road because (he is) a child of the village.
Sira bo nin yé, ko dougoulen sira.
Give him an (open) road to know the road of the children of the village (He is one of us, let us make room for him) (3).

3. Songs of Nama:
A djigina so Nama fambali, a djigina so, tjon k'a'é.
The Nama that kills has paid us a visit, he has visited us*, let us not be

[266] *The Nama protects against the souba, initiates of siri, reputed to be cannibals.

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neglectful toward him (let us welcome
the Nama who comes to visit us).
A fiéréla ka den, boli fiéréla ka den.
He has blossomed to have fruits, the
boli has blossomed to have fruits
(the Nama has had a child).
Souba yo nin kéra ma lo ko yé.
Souba yo. This is done because of shame.
Souyaya kéra dabali bé an koyé.
The practice of the souba has been done
(among us), we have a means of pro-
tecting ourselves from it. /189/

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While these hymns are being sung, the circumcised boys dance with the idol -- this is the standard expression to signify that for the first time they are executing the lascivious motions of the sacred dance.

And when they get back to their places, they are transformed, they are no longer the plain, good children who, even the day before, approached you nicely with a frank smile on their lips. They have become Bambara, and we, we are white men and strangers, masters and conquerors, and between them and us an abyss has been opened. And this abyss is opened further every day, for every time the god Komo comes out of its temple and out of the dirty foroko (goatskin) that serves as its tabernacle, they will go under the sacred trees, and will strengthen their faith and harden their hearts (1). Henceforth

1. The initiates of powerful boli's sect make a sort of "renewal of vows" a year after their admission. Those of the Komo, who are given the name of timini deou, hold a festival to break all records; there is meat and gruel to spare, and the divine liqueur, d'lo, or millet beer, is plentiful.

they will be at home in every part of the Sudan; they need not fear

the poison that kills the inquisitive and the traitors, and wherever they are asked the question, "Are you of the Komo?", they can give the password, draw two crossed lines in the sand, and then, holding the thumb, the middle finger, and fourth finger in the hand, extend the forefinger and the little finger over this mark, saying to the questioner, "I am one of you."

I have noted here the verbal text of these questions and the answers to give them.

For the Komo

Q. E b'a la Wa? Are you of the Komo?
A. Ne b'a la. I am.
Q. N'i b'a la, tjoko djira anna? If you are, show us the sign.
A. Ka'i ta Drahamé.

In saying these words bend the thumb, the middle finger, and the fourth finger while extending the forefinger and the little finger. /190/

II.

Q. E b'a la wa? Are you of the Komo?
A. Né b'a la. I am.
Q. Tjoko djira anna wé? Show us the sign.
A. Da sigi da da la.

Place a container on the mouth of a container. While saying these words, place the feet one in front of the other, and immediately add: Djan kéné ouala djan djala. Make two parallel lines in the dust.

III.

Q. E b'a la wa? Are you of the Komo?
A. Né b'a la. I am.
Q. E n'i so mâou benna mi ni? And where did you and your people meet?

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A. An benna dlaba da la, ou bi gouélé foura bosi. We met at the door of dlaba; they pick the leaves of the gouélé (false ebony) (1).

1. For the Nama.
Q. E b'a la wa? Are you of the Nama?
A. Né b'a la. I am.
Q. Féré tjon k'an.
Two straws are laid in a cross of
St. Andrew and shown to you.
A. Nin yé sira gné bo la yé. This is the road that guides, lights.
Q. A perpendicular straw is laid down.
A. Nin yé wara sé n-yé. Wara ti tama sén ko. This is the foot of a wild animal•.

• The boli are often given the epithet of wara, "wild animal," meaning "strong," "powerful."

A wild animal does not walk without legs.

Sirima-n-fign: this word is the family name, the diamou of Nama. End of the questions: Dja e b'a la koï ! Dja (exclamation) you surely are /of the Nama/.

Through the whole night there are howls of wild animals, songs and lascivious dances, bellowings of trumpets freezing one with fear, and the nasal and piercing sounds of the pipes.

At dawn a warada, speaking into the horned tube, thanks those present in the name of the god Komo; a second repeats his words into a pipe, and a djélima (storyteller /griot/ of the Komo) repeats the words of the god in plainer terms to those present. And the /191/ crowd gives thanks, utters cries, makes its requests. Everyone retires exhausted, worn out, with his throat on fire and foam on his lips,

881 reeling on his legs -- in these festivals one must get drunk to please
796 the god.
794 While all these things are happening outside, the women and little girls on the public square abandon themselves to their hearts' content. They perform none of the leaps and capers customary at ordinary festivals: shaking in their hands the goatskin bag or the white iron box full of little stones, they circle slowly, with short steps, around the orchestra, and only their buttocks move. These roll to the right and roll to the left, dip forward and quickly draw back -- a movement which is definitely not graceful. The excised girls spend the night sitting on mats covered with white cloths, between the legs of their mothers or serving women, and their heads, loosely thrown back, rest on the breasts whence they drew their life. They are wrapped in covers that have blue stripes on white background, only their heads showing, and one might say this was a display of new, shiny dolls with big black eyes, happy and all sparkling with joy. From time to time at the invitation of the dancers who sing of their grace and beauty, they shake their pierced gourds, make them rattle in their hands, and take part in the dance; then at dawn, in the morning, in a final round, they put their heels together and three times make three leaps in the air with their hands crossed on top of their heads.

And, if one believes the Negroes, this custom is not without meaning. The whitecloth on an excised girl's mat reminds the mother of one of the beautiful days of her life, the one when she gave herself to her husband in the bonds of marriage, and reminds the child hidden in her arms, wrapped in the cover like an infant in its cloths, that since she has now become a grown girl and has left childhood, she must guard her virginity. This large white cloth will testify for her on the day of her marriage as it testified for her mother, and it will be inexorable. The circle around the orchestra in short steps is the infant practicing its first steps; but now she has reached her full development, /192/ she can be sufficient to herself, and for that reason she makes these nine leaps with her hands crossed on top of her head.

881 As soon as the sabbath of the sons of the Komo is terminated
796 outside, the excised girls are led back to their huts with great pomp, with music in the lead, and the festival still goes on, for a Bambara

88 festival lasts as long as there is d'lo. After a few hours of sleep, before
196 the noon meal, the excised girls come back, and around the well there is an endless babel punctuated by joyous laughter as they wash their loincloths, the cloths soiled by the dust of the night, and as they mend gourds, the dishes of this country. The pure Bambara girls, those who are not of the blacksmith caste nor of the "Marka" people of more or less mixed stock, have lost their grace and beauty and seem quite comical with their shaved heads. Just as at six to eight days
[302] after birth the head of the village, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, priest of the dasiri fetish, made motions over their heads and cut their hair, since the "hair of the womb" is not allowed to be seen in public, so at the da woro, six days after circumcision, they lose it again, since they cannot enter life with the hair of childhood; a dirty handkerchief replaces the locks of which they were so proud, they are without bead
[751] or jewel, and on their foreheads, in place of the multicolored crown, is the string with nine knots called the tafo, and it is fastened in back at the nape of the neck to the string called the djo, which is intended to protect them from sore throat, mumps, headache, and just about all illnesses.

4. The Festival of the Boloko Déou Don Bo, The Coming Out of the Circumcised and the Excised, The Real Entry into Civil and Religious Life

88 After the da woro, the festival of the sixth day, the circumcised
193 boys go back under the sacred tree outside the village, and the excised girls return to their huts. They take up again their life of "sweet idleness," and their little excursions in a group, at specified hours, to satisfy the wants of nature. They also have their days of big excursions. When the markets take place, they go to cut thorns at some 100 meters from the village. They bar the paths, set up /193/ a barricade, and ask every passer-by for a doua-mo, a share of the market. From habit, and especially from fear of the cuffings that are readily given out and of the spirits that watch over and protect the young people, every-body obeys and pays the toll. In addition to fish tails they also take in enough cowrie shells to buy a bit of meat and make themselves a treat.

•881 This quiet life, this life of retreat, wearies the young boys and girls. At the end of four to five weeks they get hotheaded, they become insubordinate, and want to go home, for they are healed. Since the Negro man and woman appointed to watch them no longer insist, the council of elders meets and declares their task finished. In the afternoon when the sun, still high above the horizon, gathers all its rays to cast them furiously for one last time before going out in a purple disk, under the sacred trees and in the courts in front of the huts of the girls, the heads of the quarters make their gestures and simultaneously, without taking breath, recite their formulas and spit and then proceed to the exorcisms. "Bissimillahi (a phrase which in the mouth of a Bambara has not at all the meaning "in the name of God," but rather signifies "everything goes as desired"), our children are healed and they are going home, under the paternal roof; spirits that watch over them, spirits that protect them, let them go!"

881 184 There is a reason for this exorcism. Since the day when the blacksmith's razor, all shining, was lifted to cut, the little Negroes have been under the tutelage of fiercely jealous spirits. That is even one of the chief reasons why they are set apart and live far from the world, its ceremony and its work. No circumcised or excised child can set foot in a village hut, not even in that of their parents; their invisible protectors draw after them a whole series of evils, and wherever they are forced to enter they bring ruin and desolation (1).

1. O be n'wanso bla mala, "this causes misfortune to fall on a man."

To let one of these boys or girls enter one's home is to invite, if not death, at least sickness, bad luck, or the most dreadful poverty. To guard against such misfortunes, /194/ the Bambara must drive away these spirits, and since their assistance is considered useless, they are thanked with arm gestures and spitting.

889 When the exorcisms are over, the young brood scatters and runs everywhere into the huts; in the public square and in the alleys one hears interminable greetings and endless chatter. But the Bambara are too fond of drinking and eating, and they must celebrate the

healing of their children and their return home. The next morning around the wells one sees only women and young girls with naked torsos washing up in millet in plenty of water; it is to be fermented for the coming drinking bout.

And on that day, a little before the sun sets and when it is only a bloody disk, the circumcised and excised young people bring their mats, the gourd disks strung on sticks, the pierced gourds the size of a fist and filled with small pebbles, the millet stalks carried for so long as sticks, and the dirty handkerchiefs that wrapped their heads under the sacred trees, and the gnéna-n-sonnaba, the one who sacrifices to the genii protectors of the village, sets them afire. A black, thick, acrid and loathsome smoke fouls the air, and an uncertain flame of greenish red tries in vain to rise, so choked is it by old dirt and sweat. Boys and girls dart forward and jump three times over this fire of joy. At once they are purified of all their pollution; they have left behind and abandoned the old selves, smoked them out. Agile as deer or gazelles they run to their huts to masiri don ("to make themselves beautiful"). Everywhere there is an indescribable bustle! Lids of gourds, which are the Negroes' cupboards, roll on the ground, split, break, and fall to pieces, and in the midst of laughter of delirious joy there are the lamentations of an old woman who screams and grumbles. This haste and fever is the cause of delays, and the girls especially cannot yet done with arraying themselves. A piece of amber hangs too low or not low enough, the necklaces are too loose and have to be shortened, worn threads break, and beads by handfuls are lost in the dust.

At last, to the great relief of all, the cry of joy "Kouyo ê, Kouyo ê!" rings out from the four corners of the village. Preceded by the /195/ chorus of singers (a group of women and girls who clap their hands and sing a most barbaric tune in falsetto, without ever being in harmony), the drums slowly head toward the great trees of the square that is the ballroom. In all the alleys that intersect the village and make it a labyrinth, a crowd of women, men, and children rush, jostle elbows, and shout, and in a moment the square is full.

881 [887] Moment by moment the old women come closer and the word "Kouyo ê, Kouyo ê" resounds louder and louder. But now they come out, and their bodies move as if they were made of rings, so closely do they imitate a worm surprised by a ray of sunshine who is hastily returning to its nest in the ground. With their pointed chins, wrinkled skins, and toothless jaws, they look like real savages as they furiously scrape two iron rods; on their bald heads they wear dirty towels, the filthy appurtenances of sorceresses, wound without skill or taste. With spear in hand the young citizens appear in full trousers; they wear caps with double points or loud-colored turbans with long fringes, and their bodies disappear under loose blouses still all perfumed with the musty smell of the bottom of a storage bin, all stiff and shiny under a paste of starch. They leap and shout, they brandish their arms, assume the look of warriors, and especially assume such a look of conceit that one's laughter is unloosed.

[415] After the boys come the girls, fanning their "alms purses" all decorated with cowrie shells; these are platters braided of fine, pliable grass, doubtless those onto which the bloody remnants were placed on the morning of the soli si, or arms' vigil. They come forward stiffly, [301] and glide rather than walk over the ground, for their feet are weighed down by small chains and iron rings, and can hardly be lifted. Gold or copper crescents pull down the septum of their noses, a handful of striped periwinkle shells hangs from the lobe of each ear, several coral necklaces encircle their heads, and everywhere, chiefly around their necks, are pieces of amber interspersed by grigris and beads of every size and shade. Bambara of the noumou, or blacksmith caste, 881 the Marka turned Bambara, and every Bambara girl /196/ of more or 302 less mixed stock whose head was not shaved at the da woro, or festival of the sixth day, has their hair braided, and on top of the crest which ends in two small braids along each ear, there is an odd little bundle, a handful of hair. This is in memory of the eighth day after the girl's birth, the day when she was given her name, and what she is wearing is nothing less than what the Bambara call "the hair of the womb" (1). If this has been lost, as is usually the case, the

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1. Newborn infants have their heads shaved six to eight days after birth; they cannot go out of their homes before being shorn of the hair of the womb (ou ba, "their mothers"; kono, "womb"; si, hair).

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292 mother provides some of hers. The dress-up outfit of our excised girls is a regular harness; two or three loincloths in layers encircle their waists, and of the actual costume, the band of cloth which shakes behind in limp and loose trains, the big pompom is all that shows. At least one can look at them and see them, as for once pretty white blouses clothe them; the long cloth slings required in the dances are thrown over their shoulders and brought to the front and create quite a pretty effect. In Bani country the girls wear a wide belt of cowrie shells around the hips and over the loincloths, and on each side two bundles of cowrie shells hang from leather thongs that pass over the shoulders and are crossed on the chest. This dousou ko (2), as it is

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2. Dousou, "soul," "heart," "seat of love"; ko, "affair," "pledge of love."

called, is the remaining portion of the bride price given by the fiancé, and is worth 5, 000 to 6, 000 cowrie shells.

881 Around the drums that rage in the square, behind the old women who scrape their pieces of scrap iron, and behind the female story-tellers /griottes/ who sing of their charms, their strength and their beauty, the circumcised boys and excised girls circle for a few moments and go and sit on the mats that have been prepared for them.

Kola nuts are distributed to the new citizens; gourds of dége, millet flour mixed with honey water and milk, are placed at the feet of the girls, queens of the day, and the head of the village makes the speech that is required at the beginning of every festival. His herald, standing beside him, repeats it word by word, sentence by

●881 sentence, for the headman only talks in a low voice, as is in good taste. /197/ The speech is short; he calls by name each circumcised boy and excised girl and reminds everybody that among them circumcision is as old as the world, that is to say, as old as the Bambara people. "Yes," he exclaims, "our circumcised children are on the path of their fathers; they are Bambara. Youths, young girls, men and women, old men and old women, our circumcised ones can henceforth take part in palavers, sit with their elder brothers around the gourds of d'lo, or sorghum /sic/ beer, and take part in our games, our merry-making, and our rites. May everyone know it and no one forget, or ever treat them as if they were uncircumcised (1) -- that is the

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1. To call someone blakoro ("uncircumcised") is the insult of insults.

deepest insult! Everyone will know how to avenge an insult to his child, and I will know how to avenge an insult to mine." He ends by saying: "Truce to disputes; let us eat, drink, dance, and enjoy ourselves, and /leave/ serious matters (2) /until/ after the festival."

2. All disputes, all litigation, everything that disunites.

From then on, d'lo flows in streams and throats are cleansed. Everybody, young and old, men and women, dances in honor of the young "citizens," and as long as the sparkling, foaming liquor lasts, there are songs, dances, cries and shouts without end on the public square, day and night. And when the beer reaches its end, each circumcised boy and excised girl, in order of age, stretches his or her muscles before the public, accompanied by father, mother, and all his family and that of his fiancée or her finacé. This is the climax of the festival. At this point the cries and shouts redouble, and the drinkers, jug in hand, foam on their lips, gazing into space and wavering on their legs, place beads, cowrie shells, and a kola nut in the large pockets of the blouses of the circumcised youths and

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881 onto the platters of the excised girls. With the last kola nut all leap-
431 ing stops, and the festival ends. Slowly the crowd withdraws and goes home, for it has only too much need of a little rest.

881 On the days following this "coming out of the circumcised"
574 (the name given to this occasion by the Bambara), the youths and maids run around the country dressed up, and go to thank those who were at the da woro, or festival of the sixth day. Boys and girls, in two groups, under the /198/ direction of their old woman guardian, walk along the paths one after another, Indian file. At the head of the column is the massa, or queen; the massa ma Kono, her deputy, comes next, and she is followed by the massa ma Kono ségére, who again is the deputy of the one in front of her. All the others are girls that are healed, and the last, the youngest of all, is called koulé. The boys march in the same order and bear the same titles. This way of thanking people is very Bambara; although they insist on showing themselves so that people will know that they are circumcised,
[431] they want especially that alms be given them, and they go to ask a gift and hold out both hands. The Bambara people are a beggar people!

Chapter 10

Bambara Marriage

584 Little Bambara girls are betrothed when they are very young, generally between the ages of four to ten, and girls of twelve, fourteen, and sixteen years who still await a suitor are very unusual. Yet age matters little, for there are three stages in marriage: the proposal, the betrothal, and the wedding, and whoever wants to take a wife, whether he is young, mature, or an old man, married, widower, or unmarried, must obey this law.